

## In the Aftermath of 1947 Violence: Recovery and Restoration of Non-Muslim Women from Rawalpindi

### ABSTRACT

*The paper focuses on the challenging task of locating, rescuing and restoring the abducted Sikh and Hindu women from Rawalpindi that started immediately after the March rioting and became a strenuous and systematic task after August given the unprecedented scale of violence accompanying the Punjab's partition. In December 1947, the Governments of India and Pakistan embarked on recovery work after preparing necessary legislation to restore non-Muslim women to East Punjab and Muslim women to West Punjab. Between 1947 and 1955, due to the collaborative efforts of the two governments, the statistical data revealed that 2372 non-Muslim women were recovered from the six districts of the Rawalpindi division. This paper highlights that although the problems of political and administrative nature entangled the recovery work and made it a laborious task what was more difficult was to create social acceptance for recovered women, stigmatised as "impure", in a society where they were to start their lives again. Besides dealing with unreceptive social attitudes, the struggle to cope at an emotional level with the trauma of abduction and the ensuing untold miseries shaping their identities and memories also characterised the new beginnings for the recovered women.*

**Keywords:** Partition, Punjab, Rawalpindi, Abduction, Recovery, Rehabilitation, Military Evacuation Organisation, Abducted Persons Act 1949.

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## **Introduction**

As it is known that in 1947 violence in the Punjab had started much earlier than August when the partition took place and so did the discourse around the recovery of abducted women. In March 1947, when rioting escalated in the Rawalpindi division it took into its folds the hapless women of the Sikh and Hindu population in the Rawalpindi, Attock, and Jhelum districts. They were viciously attacked, wounded, and kidnapped by the perpetrators of violence after their kinsmen who guarded them were killed. Abduction of non-Muslim women became a permissible occurrence because the law and order situation created an unprecedented opportunity for rioters when ethical norms that usually served as social boundaries in peacetime were disregarded. Their abduction also indicates the interplay of communalism and gender-based violence which paved way for sexual violence against the victims. Sikh and Hindu women who were particularly attacked by Muslim aggressors for being members of the “other” community. During the attacks on non-Muslims, their women became specific targets because of their gender to inflict public humiliation not only on the family but the community as a whole. The gendered aspect of violence against such women brought them into an agonising experience of sexual violence as well which apart from physical torment unleashed psychological and emotional anguish upon the victims.

To address the sufferings of abducted women at least at the state level efforts were started for their recovery as early as March 1947 which increased in extent and became organised in execution after the partition. The work for finding and restoring the kidnapped women, Muslim and non-Muslim both, was taken up by the newly formed Governments of Pakistan and India and it continued well until 1955 when the recovery operation was concluded. Keeping in view the spatial scope of this study, the focus here is on the recovery of Sikh and Hindu women who disappeared in the Rawalpindi division in the aftermath of violence in 1947 and were restored as a result of recovery operation between 1947 and 1955. While accounting for the official programme of retrieval and reinstatement of such women, the accompanying difficulties faced at the social level are also highlighted to throw light on the hardships of their rehabilitation after being uprooted.

## **Rawalpindi Massacres and Recovery Efforts**

The matter of disappearances of Sikh and Hindu women and their swift recovery was a serious concern for non-Muslims and was taken up by non-Muslim political leaders immediately as the March rioting in Rawalpindi, addressed in official accounts as Rawalpindi massacres, had subsided. On

March 21, 1947, the Mahasabhaite leader Dr. Gokul Chand Narang wrote to Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of Punjab, that "I was also approached by some people belonging to Jand [village] in the Attock district who told me that several women had been abducted after their menfolk had been murdered. There is a danger of these women being taken across the Indus. Similar complaints have also come from Jhelum."<sup>1</sup> Clearly, there is a recognition that rescue and recovery of abducted women was a matter of great distress, importantly because, as Gokul Chand Narang stated, "there [wa]s a danger of these women being spirited away to places from where they cannot be recovered."<sup>2</sup> The Congress leader Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru met Jenkins on 16 March and suggested "special search to be made for Sikh women allegedly to have been seized by Muslims" during the rioting in the Rawalpindi division.<sup>3</sup>

In a letter to Jenkins, dated April 04, 1947, Nehru, while accounting for numerous difficulties the non-Muslims faced after the Rawalpindi massacres, said:

There is one point, however, to which I should like to draw your special attention as I did when I met you last. This is the question of rescuing [Hindu and Sikh] women who have been abducted or forcibly converted. You will realise that nothing adds to popular passion more than stories of abduction of women, and so long as these abducted women are not rescued trouble will simmer and might possibly blaze out. Every day's delay in rescuing them adds to the difficulties of the situation and makes rescue more unlikely. . . I would request you to take special interest in this matter so that the rescue of these women as well as those who have suffered compulsory conversion might be effected as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

In the letter, Nehru appreciated the rescue of about 200 women as a result of searches made, however, he emphasised that there were about 100 women who still had to be rescued.<sup>5</sup> On April 25, 1947, in a meeting with Lord Mountbatten, Sardar Vallabhai Patel mentioned the case of the 100 Sikh girls who were missing as a result of the Rawalpindi massacres and allegedly detained by the Muslims after forcible conversion. Lord Mountbatten informed Patel through a letter that upon inquiry of the Sikh girls who went missing during the Rawalpindi massacres it was found out that "some women and girls ha[d] almost certainly been removed to [former] N.W.F.P., but many

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<sup>1</sup> Gokul Chand Narang to Jenkins, 21 March 1947, IOR: R/3/1/176.

<sup>2</sup> Gokul Chand Narang to Jenkins, 21 March 1947, IOR: R/3/1/176.

<sup>3</sup> Note by Jenkins of interview with Nehru, 16 March 1947, IOR: R/3/1/176.

<sup>4</sup> Nehru to Jenkins, 4 April 1947, IOR: R/3/1/176.

<sup>5</sup> Nehru to Jenkins, 4 April 1947, IOR: R/3/1/176.

of the missing turn[ed] up later in refugee camps.”<sup>6</sup> The real tragedy that was to grow enormous in the wake of atrocious violence in August-September 1947 was that many of those non-Muslim women, who had certainly been spirited away to places from where they could not be recovered, were the unfortunate victims whose returning never became an occurrence.

### **Legislation for Reclamation of Abducted Women after Partition**

With the withdrawal of British power from India in August 1947, the task of recovering the abducted women rested on the newly formed Governments of India and Pakistan. In December, almost four months after independence, the representatives of Pakistan and India officially brought the issue of recovering abducted women and children to the table because the state intervention was necessary to restore a large number of women and children who had been left behind on either side. On December 06, 1947, the Inter-Dominion Conference was held in Lahore in which the Governments of India and Pakistan arrived at an agreement which resolved that “Every effort must be made to recover and restore abducted women and children within the shortest time possible.”<sup>7</sup> To locate and repatriate women and children to their respective countries, Muslim women to Pakistan and Hindu/Sikh women to India, each Government agreed to set up machinery that involved the local civil service and police and a good number of social workers, mainly women. It was decided that statistical data on women and children abducted would be furnished and the number of women recovered in each district and state and sent to East and West Punjab would be reported every week.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lord Mountbatten asked Jenkins to look into the matter and report to him about information about the number of Sikh girls detained by Muslims after forcible conversion. Jenkins reported that accurate figures regarding number of missing girls were not available because the Deputy Commissioner Attock said that the number of missing women in his district not yet accounted for was small (probably less than 20) and the number for the Rawalpindi district was put by the Local Relief Committee at 124. Mountbatten informed Sardar Patel about this matter in a letter dated 9 May 1947. Lord Mountbatten to Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Letter no. 133/14, 9 May 1947, IOR: R/3/1/90.

<sup>7</sup> Taisha Abraham, ed., *Women and the Politics of Violence* (New Delhi: Shakti Books, 2002), 140.

<sup>8</sup> Aparna Basu, “Uprooted Women: Partition of Punjab 1947,” in *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race*, eds. Ruth Roach Pierson, Nupur Chaudhuri and Beth McAuley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 274.

On the question of conversions in the aftermath of abductions, the two governments concluded that “Conversions by persons abducted after 1 March 1947 will not be recognised, and all such persons must be restored to their respective dominions. The wishes of the persons concerned are irrelevant. Consequently, no statements of such persons should be recorded before magistrates.”<sup>9</sup> About assigning primacy to religious identity for repatriation of abducted women, Urvashi Butalia rightly points out that “even for a self-defined secular nation (India) the natural place/homeland for women was defined in religious, indeed, communal terms, thereby pointing to a dissonance/disjunction between its professedly secular rhetoric . . . and its actively communal identification of women.”<sup>10</sup> Not only were women religiously stamped as Hindu or Muslim subjects but they were ultimately seen as a symbol of the nation’s honour to be restored. The men of their respective communities defined how to bring women back to their “own” community and their “own” homeland. The treaty was a landmark to commence repatriation at the state level but the precise wishes of the “abducted women” were overlooked. For rehabilitation, it was the governments which were to decide for their “rightful” homes regardless of what the women wanted. In this way, the kidnapped women were perceived not as an agency but as objects which needed the state to decide on their behalf. The treaty had, therefore, fundamentally positioned women at a place that marked the abandonment of their voices. In this manner these women were made the “silenced subaltern”, as Gayatri Spivak notes, the subaltern “cannot speak and the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.”<sup>11</sup>

On the Indian side, the recovery operation was placed under the Women’s Section of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation with Rameshwari Nehru as Honorary Advisor and Mridula Sarabhai as Chief All India Organiser.<sup>12</sup> Many women such as Jogendra Singh, Miss Makhan Singh, Bhag Mehta, Gulab Pandit, Damyanti Sahgal, Purnima Banerji, Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Sucheta Kripalani, Bibi Amtus Salam, Begum Anis Kidwai, Mrs. Handoo, Mrs. Shobha Nehru, Vimla Dang came forward to assist in the recovery and rehabilitation efforts.<sup>13</sup> The women social workers looked after

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<sup>9</sup> Pippa Virdee, *From the Ashes of 1947: Reimagining Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 172.

<sup>10</sup> Urvashi Butalia, “Community, State and Gender: On Women’s Agency during Partition,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 17 (1993): WS-16.

<sup>11</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Cultures*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 287.

<sup>12</sup> Butalia, “Community, State and Gender”: WS-16-17.

<sup>13</sup> Ritu Menon, ed., *Women Writes on Partition of India and Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2006), 8.

recovery work through camps established in each district of West Punjab for reception and interim relief of recovered women. In the districts of Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat, and Mianwali recovery work started in May 1948 as these areas were declared closed areas by Pakistan.<sup>14</sup>

The recovery work had slowed down with the withdrawal of the Military Evacuation Organisation from both countries. To further the recovery work the Government of India promulgated the Recovery of Abducted Persons Ordinance in January 1949 whereas the Government of Pakistan issued it in May 1949.<sup>15</sup> In India, the Ordinance was re-promulgated when it expired in July 1949. When the re-promulgated Ordinance was near expiry it was transformed into a Bill and presented in parliament which was passed and became an Act on December 28, 1949.<sup>16</sup> With this Act in place, the recovery operation for abducted persons continued till 1957, when the Abducted Persons Act, 1949, was allowed to lapse.<sup>17</sup>

Since rioting had begun in the Punjab as early as March 1947, thus, the Act stated that "abducted person" meant:

a male child under the age of sixteen years or a female of whatever age, who is, or immediately before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of March 1947, was a Muslim and who, on or after that day and before the first day of January 1949, has become separated from his or her family and is found to be living with or under the control of any other individual or family, and in the latter case includes a child born to any such female after the said date.<sup>18</sup>

The Act was influenced by the idea of gender in the patriarchal setup of Indian society as it made a marked distinction between abducted men and women. Women of any age were presumed as "kidnapped" whose decision of restoration was to be made by the state whereas any male of 16 years and above was seen as responsible enough to make his own decision. It was agreed by Pakistan and India that all marriages concluded after March 01, 1947, would be seen as forced, and, consequently, invalid.

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<sup>14</sup> Basu, "Uprooted Women," 274.

<sup>15</sup> Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, "Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition," *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 17 (1993): WS-4.

<sup>16</sup> Basu, "Uprooted Women," 278.

<sup>17</sup> Menon and Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> Abducted Persons (Recover and Restoration) Act, 1949 (Act No. LXV of 1949), *Gazette*, 28 December 1949, in Menon and Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, Appendix I, 261.

## Retrieval and Resettlement of Non-Muslim Women from Rawalpindi

As a result of the recovery operation, 20,728 Muslims were recovered from India and returned to Pakistan whereas 9,032 non-Muslim abducted persons were recovered from Pakistan and sent to India by 30 September 1955.<sup>19</sup> Between December 1947 and August 1955, 2372 non-Muslim women and children were recovered from the Rawalpindi Division and restored to India. During the initial years, the recovery process was rather rapid, primarily because the MEO (Military Evacuation Organisation) was engaged in the entire network of recovery of abducted persons. With the withdrawal of the MEO from both India and Pakistan recoveries dropped rather drastically but even in the closing days of the recovery programme, there were still women being repatriated. The table below shows the number of recoveries made from the Rawalpindi Division which were more in the initial years but decreased in the later years.

**Number of Non-Muslim Women and Children Recovered from the Rawalpindi Division, West Punjab (December 1947-August 1955)<sup>20</sup>**

Place	6. 12.47 to 31.12. 49	Jan. to Dec. 1950	Jan. to Dec. 1951	Jan. to Dec. 1952	Jan. to Dec. 1953	Jan. to Dec. 1954	Jan. to Aug. 1955	Total
Campbellpur	12	24	39	13	1	...	...	89
Gujrat	320	41	38	8	15	18	13	453
Kunja Camp* (Gujrat)	950	...	...	...	...	...	...	950
Jhelum	163	19	29	17	8	5	1	242
Mianwali	209	9	6	1	1	2	1	229
Rawalpindi	180	51	21	16	5	7	6	286
Sargodha	104	3	5	2	5	2	2	123
Rawalpindi Division								2372

<sup>19</sup> Fortnightly Summary for the Period Ending 30 September 1955, Cabinet Secretary, National Documentation Centre, Islamabad, cited in Virdee, *From the Ashes of 1947*, 182. The same figures for the period are available in Menon and Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, Appendix II, 264–67.

\* The maximum number of recovery was made from the Kunja camp set up in Gujrat district which accommodated the incoming non-Muslims from Kashmir when there was fight going on there. About 600 women were sent to India by the Pakistan army from Kunja camp. Menon and Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, 81.

<sup>20</sup> Menon and Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, Appendix II, 264.

There were various issues which entangled the recovery programme at various levels and stages. Innumerable problems such as mistrust between the two governments,<sup>21</sup> non-cooperation and unreceptive attitude from local police and other officials towards the recovery staff at various places and stages of their work,<sup>22</sup> and the lack of public cooperation added to the difficulties for the recovery staff in locating, rescuing and restoring abducted women. In addition to these problems, a lot of propaganda was also being done to induce insecurity and fear among the non-Muslim women dissuading them to return to their original homes. Kamlaben Patel, an Indian social worker who was stationed in Lahore for a few years after the partition and was actively involved in recovering the Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan, writes in her memoirs that the abducted women were told that their relations were dead, that there was insufficient food for them, their families would not accept them and so on; this deterred some of them risking their lives again.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, some non-Muslim women did not want to go back because during the long years of the recovery operation they were now settled in their new homes. Many including Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru was of the view that women who had assimilated with their new

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<sup>21</sup> At various stages of recovery process there had been developments from both governments which created distrust among them and also affected the recovery of abducted persons. For example, Mr. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, Minister of Transport in charge of Recovery, in the Indian Parliament alleged that 2,000 non-Muslim women were in the custody of Pakistani Government. However, the Pakistani Government retaliated by claiming that their enquiries reveal that the allegations were baseless. The Pakistani Government informed the Government of India that such false reports and sweeping statements were not likely to improve the recovery of abducted persons. See, Virdee, *From the Ashes of 1947*, 176.

<sup>22</sup> For the recovery of abducted women, the list was routinely provided to the Pakistani police by the Indian officials but the Pakistani police in various cases usually returned, marked with "not traceable" against most names. In one instance, fed up with this attitude of the police the Indian lady in charge of the camp set up for the recovery of abducted women in Mianwali district undertook a protest fast. The Indian army unit in Mianwali district relayed this news to Kamlaben Patel, Mridula Sarabhai's associate in the Indian government's recovery work of the abducted women, who with great difficulty persuaded the lady officer give up her fast she had kept for three days, and eat some food. See, Kamlaben Patel, "Lock Up Your Hearts," in *Women Writers on Partition of Pakistan & India*, ed. Ritu Menon (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2006), 165-66.

<sup>23</sup> Kamla Patel, *Torn from the Roots: A Partition Memoir* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2005), 139.



surroundings should not be forced to go back to their original homes as it meant uprooting them again to face future uncertainties.<sup>24</sup> While others such as Mridula Sarabhai believed that the recovered women must be reunited with their original families and go back to their rightful homes, and if any abducted woman refused to return it was out of fear or a confused state of mind.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, social worker Anis Kidwai believed that to force the woman who had become a respected housewife and mother in her “new” home to go back to her old home was “not a charity but a crime.”<sup>26</sup> The reclamation of these women by the state was no less than their original abduction but it was presented as restorative, legitimate and legal since it was the will of the state.<sup>27</sup>

There were numerous and complex reasons involved at the personal level for which some women did not want to go back. An important reason was that Hindu and Sikh Muslim women feared that now they were “polluted” and there was little point in going back as they thought their families were unlikely to embrace them.<sup>28</sup> They feared what would happen to them as a consequence of this “recovery” as they believed they had been “dishonoured” and would be stigmatised and excluded as impure if they were to return.<sup>29</sup> Their non-acceptance by their families became such an acute problem that in December 1947 Gandhi had to address this issue. In his morning-prayer meeting, he explicitly stated:

It is being said that the families of the abducted women no longer want to receive them back. It would be a barbarian husband or a barbarian parent who would say that he would not take back his wife or daughter. I do not think the women concerned had done anything wrong. They had been subjected to violence. To put a blot on them and say that they are no longer fit to be accepted in society is unjust.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Basu, “Uprooted Women,” 279.

<sup>25</sup> Basu, “Uprooted Women,” 279.

<sup>26</sup> Virdee, *From the Ashes of 1947*, 183.

<sup>27</sup> Radhika Mohanram, “Gendered Spectre: Trauma, Cultural Memory and the India Partition,” *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 6 (2011): 923-924.

<sup>28</sup> Patel, *Torn from the Root*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> Kavita Daiya, ““Honourable Resolutions”: Gendered Violence, Ethnicity and the Nation,” *Alternatives* 27 (2002): 232.

<sup>30</sup> Speech by Mahatma Gandhi at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, 7 December 1947, no. 163, Government of India, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XC, November 11, 1947-January 30, 1948 (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1984), 193.

Given the strong notions of family honour in Punjabi society, embracing the recovered women with open arms was not as simple as the Government had hoped. Nehru had to issue repeated appeals, asking 'Hindu men to accept the women who were recovered and to not punish them for the sins of their abductors.'<sup>31</sup> In January 1948, Nehru made a public appeal which stated:

Their families and relatives should welcome them [women and girls who had been abducted] back and give them all comfort and solace after their harrowing experience. I am told that sometimes there is an unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women in their homes. This is the most objectionable and wrong attitude to take up. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help.<sup>32</sup>

To create social acceptance for recovered women the Ministry of Rehabilitation even issued a pamphlet invoking the Laws of Manu<sup>33</sup> to argue that "a woman who had sex with a man other than her husband became purified after three menstrual cycles, and that her family should have no hesitation in accepting her back".<sup>34</sup> Similarly, stories were also popularised that "Sita had had sexual congress with Ravana, despite which she remained pure" to convince families to take their women back into their homes.<sup>35</sup> In a government publication issued in 1948, it was written that:

Gandhiji's appeal to Indians that 'those Hindu and Sikh sisters who have been abducted, molested or converted by Muslims should be received with open arms and given the same place which they occupied before in society, reinforced by similar statements by the Prime Minister and other Indian leaders, had brought about an appreciable change for the better in the attitude of the people.'<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>32</sup> S. Gopal, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series* Vol. 5 (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987), 113.

<sup>33</sup> The Laws of Manu, also known *Mānava Dharmaśāstra*, is a Sanskrit Language Indian ancient treatise codified by Manu, the ancient teacher of sacred rites and laws. The date of composition of the text is though uncertain but it is believed to be about 200 AD. The text is divided into various sections that deal with various aspects of Hindu life and address the social, legal and moral questions in Hindu culture. For more, see Patrick Olivelle, *The Law Code of Manu* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Bede Scott, "Partitioning Bodies: Literature, Abduction and the State," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 44.

<sup>35</sup> Butalia, "Community, State and Gender," WS-18.

<sup>36</sup> Government of India, *Millions on the Move: The Aftermath of Partition* (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1948), 71.

From the statement above it can be seen that at least there was some degree of change in the prevailing social attitudes but the reality was that the state's involvement did not change the reluctance at broader levels of society towards the innocent lives who had been through pain and miseries. Non-Muslim women suffered personal tragedies as a consequence of the recovery programme when their fathers or husbands or brothers did not agitate for the return of their women. For such families, once their women had been abducted they became "absences" in their families and, hence, they ceased to exist. Their family had reconciled with their absence and it was now inconvenient to readjust and admit a person who had become "polluted".<sup>37</sup> For such women *ashrams* were set up in north Indian cities like Jullundur, Amritsar, Karnal, and Delhi to house them.<sup>38</sup> It was this fear of rejection by the family and community that several Hindu and Sikh women resisted forced repatriation under the recovery programme. When these women considered the possibility of being back "home", they wondered where was home now? The home as a site of familiarity and sustenance, with opportunities to start up again where they left off before they disappeared, rather than the home as a place of masculine territory policing their "purity".

The women, not only Hindu and Sikh but Muslim also, most of the time refused to talk about their kidnapping and subsequent sexual abuse. They continued and began another life in an attempt to cope with the torment they had been through. As Krishna Sobti, an Indian woman writer who survived the partition, once said that it was difficult to forget but dangerous to remember.<sup>39</sup> The memory of abduction and the ensuing miseries became a site of silence for several women because to remember the traumatic events of the 1947 partition was to re-experience the suffering of the original wounds. To the reluctance of women victims of violence to remember past experiences, Veena Das as an anthropologist tends to make an appealing observation while conducting ethnographic fieldwork among the Punjabi families displaced by partition. She observed the zone of silence adjoining women's sufferings when her interviewees were asked to portray their experiences of the 1947 partition. For Das "this silence was achieved either by the use of language that was general and metaphoric but that evaded the specific descriptor of any events to capture the particularity of their experience or by describing the surrounding events but leaving the actual

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<sup>37</sup> Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), 162.

<sup>38</sup> Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, 162.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Urvashi Butalia, "Looking Back on Partition," *Contemporary South Asia* 26, no. 3 (2018): 264.

experience of abduction and rape unstated.”<sup>40</sup> These agonising memories of rioting and women connection with assaults were at times contrasted with “poison that makes the inside of the woman dissolve, as a solid is dissolved in a powerful liquid (*andar hi andar ghul ja rahi hai*)”.<sup>41</sup> The issues of honour and shame associated with women’s sexual purity also moved the community to offer protection by silence to the women abducted who were later recovered, and to the families suffering from the belief of the misfortune of having been unable to protect the honour of their women.

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<sup>40</sup> Veena Das, “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain,” in *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margeret Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 84.

<sup>41</sup> Das, “Language and Body,” 84.

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